

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00
DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 /052 W
-----182127Z 121798 /46

R 182015Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4472
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY NASSAU
AMEMBASSY PORT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KINGSTON 1301

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINR, JM
SUBJECT: DUNCAN INTO EVERYTHING, INCLUDING HOT WATER

1. D.K. DUNCAN, MINISTER FOR NATIONAL MOBILIZATION, HAS BECOME THE CABINET MEMBER WITH THE HIGHEST PROFILE, AFTER PRIME MINISTER MICHAEL MANLEY. DUNCAN IS SEEN EVERYWHERE. HE TALKS TO SCHOOLS, TO SERVICE CLUBS, TO WORKERS, TO ALL AND SUNDRY, SPREADING THE GOSPEL OF SOCIALIST MOBILIZATION. DUNCAN IS INEVITABLY GARBED IN CASUAL, BUT FASHIONABLY TAILORED JEANS AND WEARING THE STOCKING CAP OF THE JAMAICAN "SUFFERER" (NOW RE-NAMED "STRUGGLER"), WITH EYES HIDDEN BEHIND DARK GLASSES. WHETHER HE IS ON HIS WAY TO BECOMING THE "SUPER-MINISTER" WHICH HIS PORTFOLIO WOULD SEEM TO PERMIT -- GIVEN ITS EXTENSIVE MANDATE -- IS NOT YET CLEAR. BUT DUNCAN IS NOW UBIQUITOUS, AND HARD AT WORK TRYING TO TRANSLATE THE STRATEGY WHICH BROUGHT THE PEOPLES NATIONAL PARTY (PNP) VICTORY IN DECEMBER 1976 INTO A FORMULA FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION.

2. DUNCAN IS AN AVOWED SOCIALIST PREPARED TO STATE HIS BELIEFS
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IN UNEQUIVOCAL TERMS. HE TENDS TO FRIGHTEN THOSE JAMAICANS WHO DO NOT SHARE HIS VIEWS. HIS MINISTRY HAS RECENTLY PROMULGATED THE VIEW THAT THE VICTORY OF THE PNP LAST DECEMBER GAVE A MANDATE TO THE RULING PARTY TO FULFILL A VERY PARTICULAR PROGRAM (I.E., THAT SPELLED OUT IN THE PARTY'S ELECTION MANIFESTO). ANY DISSENT FROM THAT MANIFESTO IS CONTRARY TO "THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE", AND, BY

UNSUBTLE IMPLICATION, TREASONOUS. MOREOVER, DISSENT EVEN INCLUDES ASSERTIONS THAT THE PNP GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE FALLS SHORT OF JAMAICA'S NEEDS. IT IS HARDLY SURPRISING THAT THE MINISTRY MIGHT SUGGEST SUCH AN IDEA. IT IS CLEAR THAT DUNCAN INTENDS TO USE HIS PORTFOLIO TO BIND GOVERNMENT AND PARTY (HE REMAINS THE PNP'S GENERAL SECRETARY) EVER MORE CLOSELY TOGETHER. AS AN EXAMPLE, DUNCAN IS GIVEN TO CLOSING OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE WITH BOTH HIS PARTY AND MINISTERIAL TITLES.

3. GLEANER COLUMNIST DAVID D'COSTA, WITH TONGUE IN CHEEK, URGED HIS READERS ON MARCH 16 TO TAKE CARE TO AVOID ASSIGNING GREATER IMPORTANCE TO DUNCAN THAN HE DESERVES. DESCRIBING THE MINISTER AS A MAN OF "MODEST INTELLECTUAL GIFTS AND PRODIGIOUS ENERGY", D' COSTA NOTES THAT THE TALENTS NEEDED TO WIN AN ELECTION AND TO MOBILIZE A NATION ARE, IN THE END, QUITE DIFFERENT. ELECTORAL SUCCESS REQUIRES "SKILLFUL EXPLOITATION OF DIVISION, THE RELENTLESS WILLINGNESS TO SIMPLIFY COMPLEX ISSUES, AND A GOOD DEAL OF BARE-FACED RAZZLE-DAZZLE", SAYS D'COSTA. IN CONTRAST, HE CONTINUES, MOBILIZATION REQUIRES "CONFIDENCE AND TRUST." DUNCAN'S RELIANCE ON "INFLAMMATORY JARGON," AND HIS "PRIMITIVE" PERCEPTION OF THE CAUSES OF JAMAICA'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS PROMPT ONLY A "PARTISAN" RESPONSE.

4. D'COSTA REMARKS BELIE HIS THESIS, AS HE INTENDS, AND REVEAL THAT HE DOES TAKE DUNCAN SERIOUSLY, MOST

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PARTICULARLY FOR THE DAMAGE HE CAN DO TO DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS. THIS CONCERN OVER THE ACTIVITIES OF DUNCAN IS ALSO SHARED BY SOME OF THE MOBILIZATION MINISTER'S FELLOW CABINET MEMBERS, ALTHOUGH THEY MAY BE AS MUCH DISTURBED BY HIS POACHING ON THEIR MINISTERIAL TURF AS BY CONSIDERATIONS OF IDEOLOGY. EDUCATION MINISTER ERIC BELL IS REPORTEDLY CONCERNED THAT DUNCAN HAS GONE DIRECTLY --BY LETTER -- TO SCHOOLS IN JAMAICA, CALLING ON STUDENTS AND TEACHERS TO CONTRIBUTE THEIR IDEAS TO THE PRODUCTION PROGRAM PROCESS PRESENTLY UNDERWAY. SOME OF THE SCHOOLS REFERRED DUNCAN'S LETTER TO THE EDUCATION MINISTRY, AT THE SAME TIME TELLING THE MOBILIZATION MINISTRY THAT THEY ARE RESPONSIBLE TO THE FORMER MINISTRY, AND EDUCATION MINISTER BELL WAS DRAWN INTO THE CONTRETEMPS. SIMILARLY, DUNCAN INTERVENED (AT THE REQUEST OF WORKERS) IN A LABOR DISPUTE. LABOR MINISTER ISAACS' NOSE IS NOW OUT OF JOINT. HE HAS HAD TO REMIND STRIKING

WORKERS THAT IT IS HIS MINISTRY WHICH
DEALS WITH LABOR PROBLEMS. BOTH BELL AND
ISAACS ARE, UNSURPRISINGLY, NUMBERED AMONG THE
"MODERATES". ANOTHER MODERATE, INDUSTRY AND
COMMERCE MINISTER BLAKE, FREELY LABELS DUNCAN AND
HIS RADICAL ASSOCIATES "LUNATICS" IN PRIVATE CON-
VERSATION.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KINGSTON 1301

5. IF DUNCAN HAS MANAGED TO OFFEND SOME OF HIS
CABINET COLLEAGUES BY HIS ACTIONS, HIS WORDS ON
ANOTHER OCCASION HAVE FRIGHTENED MOST OF
JAMAICA'S MIDDLE CLASS. SPEAKING ON MARCH 10 TO A
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE JAMAICA ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL
WORKERS, DUNCAN WAS REPORTED IN THE GLEANER TO HAVE
SAID THAT THE PNP INTENDED TO BREAK DOWN THE BAS-
TIONS OF AUTHORITY IN ORDER TO CREATE A SOCIALIST
SOCIETY. WHILE DUNCAN SUBSEQUENTLY CLAIMED THAT HE
WAS MISQUOTED AND THAT HE HAD SAID THAT THE PNP
INTENDS TO "BREAK DOWN THE BASTIONS OF
PRIVILEGE IN THE SOCIETY", THE REPORTERS' NOTEBOOK
QUOTES THE MINISTER AS SAYING "BASTIONS OF AUTHORITY".
IF THE REPORTER MISQUOTED DUNCAN, THE SLIP AT LEAST
REVEALS THE IMPACT WHICH THE MINISTER HAS HAD ON
THE POPULAR MIND; IF DUNCAN WAS QUOTED CORRECTLY
BUT HAD INTENDED TO SAY "BASTIONS OF PRIVILEGE",
HIS OWN SLIP TELLS US MUCH ABOUT HIS OWN STATE OF
MIND AND UNDERSCORES THE REASONS WHY HE IS SEEN AS
A MENACE BY RELATIVELY AFFLUENT AND/OR EDUCATED

JAMAICANS.
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